

The physical Local Public Inspection File (Public File) housed at all broadcast station offices and the related on-line version on the FCC web site are outdated and serve no purpose to the public. These files and the rules related to a station's Public File were developed over five decades ago and serve no purpose in today's media. Hundreds of hours at each station are wasted in generating and maintaining these files. Any current or past general manager will tell you that they have never had a member of the general public come to the station and ask to view the Public File. The only time, I have ever heard of someone coming into a broadcast station to review a Public File is if a member of the FCC's own staff makes a surprise inspection of the station.

Issues with the Public File and any related FCC fines are for the most part self-reported by the broadcaster when subsequently identified or at license renewal time. Any issues with Public File are rarely identified from the general public or the FCC's own staff efforts or investigations.

Many of the documents required to be in the Public File are readily available on multiple on-line web sites (www.FCCdata.org, www.rabbitears.info, www.fccinfo.com) as well the FCC's Media Bureau web site. Examples of these documents are: Copies of License, Applications and Related Material, Contour Maps, a copy of The Public and Broadcasting and Ownership Reports.

I would also argue that the quarterly Children Television Programming reporting and Issues and Programming reporting serve no purpose except to list every program and news story that the station aired during the past period. These lists are often hundreds of pages long that no one reads nor do they serve the purpose that was intended 50 years ago. Most network affiliated television broadcast station airs many more hours of news every day than they did in a week a few decades ago. The market place has made that happen not FCC rules. At the same time very few radio stations and non-Big 4 independent television stations have the staff to do any news or public affairs programming. Those station's licenses are routinely renewed having never air any news or public affairs programming.

Finally, other items required to be in a Public File such as letters and email from the public, Local Public Notice Announcements of renewal, sell modification of licensee, Must Carry or Retransmission Consent elections have never had an impact on a station licensee renewal. They just add another five pounds of paper to a file that is the loneliest in a broadcast station.